Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with development of gastrointestinal problems in patients with scleroderma: a protocol for a systematic review.

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Reviewer: Jean Sibilia

Reviewer's report:

Major comments:

• This paper is the description of a protocol for a systematic review of the factors associated with GI problems in scleroderma, which is an original approach. In this work the authors do not present data but describe the accurate methodology required to conduct a "systematic review".

• The “medical” question is an excellent question because GI problems contribute considerably to impairment of the quality of life and probably to healthcare costs in scleroderma. However, I am not absolutely sure that the major approach to better understand the GI problem should be an analysis of the “classical” risk factors of scleroderma (like silica, solvents, drugs, …). Some other factors including intestinal microbiota and foods could be more important although the data are very poor. The authors need to comment on this point.

Minor comments:

• In the introduction, the phrase “SSc is a disease characterized by collagen overproduction…” is actually not appropriate. The pathogeny of SSc is more complex.

• Why do the authors use the “old” ACR criteria (1989) and not the new criteria? This is probably linked to old papers included in this review which used the classical ACR criteria. The authors should justify their choice in the methods section.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.